

THE MEGALITHIC BURIALS AND URN-FIELDS OF SOUTH INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF TAMIL LITERATURE AND TRADITION¹

By K. R. SRINIVASAN

Reference has been made above (p. 1) to the current survey of the megalithic monuments of South India, and of the urn-fields which appear to be in part contemporary with them. These memorials of 'non-Aryan' India (as it would appear) are of more than local interest. In other parts of Asia, in Africa and in Europe are megalithic structures closely similar to some of those of the Indian peninsula, and the possibility of an integral unity of ideas and expression over a large part of the earth's surface from 2,000 to 4,000 years ago lends to the enquiry an unusual potential importance. At present, however, we know very little about the Indian monuments of this class, and, pending the results of fieldwork, information from any source, however indeterminate, is worthy of consideration. An Assistant Superintendent in the Archaeological Survey of India who was formerly Curator of the Museum of Pudukkottai State, where megaliths are particularly numerous, here draws certain general conclusions from the evidence of Tamil literature and tradition.

THOUGH an extensive literature has grown up about the numerous megalithic burials in India, we are as yet nowhere near an accurate knowledge of their date or of the various cultural phases which they seem to represent. Their correct interpretation still awaits the spade of the scientific archaeologist. Meanwhile it is useful to know something of the local traditions about them, and of the references to them in the literature and inscriptions of the Tamil country where they occur in such profusion,² and where a rich heritage of literature is extant, ranking in antiquity next only to Sanskrit. In the present paper are collected a number of references—traditional, literary and epigraphical—which are difficult of access to scholars not acquainted with the Tamil language and literature.

Tradition and epigraphy

Megalithic sites are locally called *kuraṅguppattāḍai*, which has sometimes been taken to mean 'the workshop of the monkeys' and associated with a legend relating to the monkey hordes that followed Rāma. A Pāṇḍya inscription of the thirteenth century from Nārttāmalai,³ relating to the endowment to the temple of lands in Tāyinippattī, on the other side of the hills, describes an area included within the boundaries—a burial site—as 'strewn with large stones and containing *kurakkuppaḍai*'. Thus the modern name *kuraṅguppattāḍai* is a corruption of the old name *kurakkuppaḍai* or *kurakkupattāḍai* which means 'a sepulture or tomb lowered into the earth'. This can only refer to the stone cists.⁴ The name *kalkuttu* sometimes given in old revenue registers to these sites

¹ Part of a paper entitled 'Indian Megaliths, with special reference to Pudukkottai' read before the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the 31st Indian Science Congress, Delhi, 1944.

² The results of the author's survey of these sites in Pudukkottai State alone (1,178 sq. miles) have shown that there are more than 80 villages containing more than 150 groups of these ancient burials in all their variety. There are at least as many in each of the other districts of the peninsula awaiting systematic survey.

³ *Inscriptions (Texts) of the Pudukkottai State* (State Press, Pudukkottai, 1929), No. 325, p. 197.

⁴ *Kurakku* means 'to lower or bury'; *paḍai* may mean a bed on which one rests, the original connotation of the Sanskrit word *śmaśāna* which according to Yāska is a 'couch of stone' (*aśma-śayana*). *Paḍai* is

is clear, meaning places where stones are planted or pitched. Since the sites contain pottery urns, they are also described by the local people as places with *madamadakkattāli*, which is a corruption of *mudumakkaḷ-tāli*, meaning the urns or receptacles (*tāli*) in which the ancients or ancestors are buried. This is the name found in early Tamil works from the third century B.C. to the twelfth century A.D. The other synonyms found in these are *mudu-makkaṭ-cādi* (*cādi* or *jādi-jar*), *imattāli* (funerary urn or receptacle) or simply *tāli*. The name *tāli* itself, indicating a large receptacle for burial, is evidently derived from *tāl* which means 'to lower into the earth' or 'to bury', and the original sense in which it is used is of a vessel that is buried. An early inscription from Tirukkattalai, near Kalasakkādu where these urns are in plenty, denotes a certain land as *andarāt-tāli-puñcey*¹—dry land with buried funerary urns. The stone circles are called *kaṭṭidai* (*kiḍai*, circle, of *kal*, stone) in a Tanjore inscription² which mentions them along with the burning-grounds of the Veḷḷālar and Paṛaiyar in the village, and this is noticed by Mr. K. V. Subrahmanya Aiyar.³ The oldest extant Tamil work, *Tolkāppiyam* (Por. 60), has *naḍukal*—the stone planted over the grave, the 'menhir'. The name *pāṇḍavakkūḷi* prevalent in some other Tamil districts may be a corruption of *māṇḍavar-kūḷi*—the burial-pit of the dead, or of *bhāṇḍakkūḷi*—the pit in which the pots (*bhāṇḍa*, in Tamil *pāṇḍam*) are buried. Or it may be a corruption of *pāṇḍavakkūḷi*—the burial of those who performed useless penance, as one of the beliefs in later times was that the Ājīvakas or Jainas, whose penance was 'useless' in the eyes of the followers of the Vedic religion, were buried in such pots. The Toda name *ālāram* means in Tamil the burial circle (*āl-āram*). The Kannada name *mōrriar-mane* is difficult to explain. Sewell⁴ notices the Telugu names *Rākshasa gullu* or *gōli*—the graves of the *Rākshasas* and derives the name of Gōli village from this.

Before we proceed to examine the literary references, it is of interest to mention a few facts about the word *tāli*⁵ of the early Tamil inscriptions. In the inscriptions of the early period, ranging from the seventh to eleventh century, when the Pallavas and Cōlas ruled the Tamil country and excavated and built stone temples, the term *tāli* always denotes the *sanctum* of the stone temples.⁶ Prior to this we have literary and inscriptional evidences to show that temples were built of brick, mortar and timber, which perished. The natural caverns in the hills, with drip-ledges, beds and inscriptions, are the earliest monuments extant. These religious resorts were not called *tāli* but *pāli* or *aman-pāli* (Jaina cave resorts) since they were mostly associated with the Jaina ascetics. An early inscription (ninth century A.D.) referring to the excavation of a rock-cut shrine, which is called *tāli*, is published in *Inscr. of Pudukkottai State*, No. 18. The chief, who excavated this Śiva cave temple, says that 'having excavated the Tiruvālattūr hill in the form of a *tāli*, he installed the god in it'. The expression 'in the form of a *tāli*' is significant. It evidently

probably a derivation from *paḍu*, to sleep or die. In early Tamil inscriptions of the ninth to tenth centuries the word is used in the same sense in *paḷippaḍai*, by which name shrines built over the graves of the Cōla kings are referred to. *Paḍai* also means the whole or part of the structure or edifice buried or overground, *paṭṭaḍai* is used in the sense *paḍu*, lay to rest, or *paṭṭu*, to die, and *aḍai* (*aḍakkam* or *aḍakkudal*), burial.

¹ Ibid., No. 38, p. 18.

² *South Indian Inscriptions, Archaeological Survey of India*, II (1891) Part 1, No. 5, p. 54.

³ K. V. S. Aiyar, *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Dekkhan* (1917), p. 359.

⁴ R. Sewell, *List of Antiquarian Remains in the Presidency of Madras* (Madras, 1882), I, Topographical List, 57-58 and 60.

⁵ See my paper 'A note on *Tāli*', *Archaeological Society of S. India*, Madras, July 1944.

⁶ *Mēṇṇāli* = western temple; *kiḷ-tāli* = eastern temple; *vaḍa-tāli* = northern temple; *kaṇṇāli* (*kal-tāli*) = a temple built of stones, etc.

denotes that the structure, a cell, was fashioned in the form of a pre-existing type called *taḷi* or a rock-excavation. This does not occur in Śaṅgam Tamil. In our quest of the origin of this term, our attention is naturally drawn to the rock-cut tombs of Malabar, which happen to be the only rock-cut monuments prior to these early cave temples in the South. The most famous among them is in Taḷi-paraṁba, which is the Malayalam equivalent of the Tamil term *taḷi-paraṁbu*, and means in both cases 'the hill containing *taḷi* or rock-cut cells'. Thus we seem to get here what the term *taḷi* originally meant, and the force of the expression 'in the form of a *taḷi*' in the inscription quoted above becomes clear. Incidentally we have got here the local Tamil or pre-Tamil name for this type of funerary monument, which is peculiar to the softer laterite hills of the west coast.

Early literature

The earliest extant works are of the 'Śaṅgam epoch', which was the Augustan age of Tamil literature. They are mainly collections of anthologies of different poets, and the two epics, *Maṇimēkhalai* and *Śilappadikāram*, are said to belong to the close of the period, or to a period slightly later. The poems of the Śaṅgam age are realistic and *prima facie* trustworthy; they portray a civilization with advanced customs and manners, and relate anecdotes of the kings, their wars and their patronage of literary men. The most widely accepted date for this literature is the first three centuries of the Christian era, though some of the works or the literary tradition embodied in them may well go back to a century or two before Christ. The sheet-anchor for this chronology is the synchronism of the Śaṅgam Cēra king Śenguttuvan with Gajabāhu I of Ceylon, who according to the *Mahāvamsa* ruled between 113 and 135 A.D. or 173 and 195 A.D.¹

There is perfect concord between the data relating to the Tamil kings and the life of the Tamils as depicted in the Śaṅgam anthologies on one side and the writings of the classical authors of the early centuries of the Christian era (notably the compiler of the *Periplus* and Ptolemy) and the finds of Roman coins of the early Imperial period on the other. The earliest stratum of Tamil literature shows the influence of the growing religions of the North, and the date of this active penetration of Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Jaina religions into the South may well be placed in the last three centuries before Christ. We have Jaina caverns of this date in the Tamil country, literary and other evidences of Buddhistic migration to the South and Ceylon, and notices of South India and her trade in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya and the *Indika* of Megasthenes. Thus we may take it that what the Śaṅgam literature portrays is the culture which existed in the extreme South between the third century B.C. and the third century A.D.

The *Puṛaṇānūru*, an anthology of 400 verses by different poets composed in different periods of the early Śaṅgam age, has many references to the burial-ground and to urn-burials and a few to cremation. The general term used for the grave is *kāḍu* or *puṛaṅkāḍu* which means a waste-land set apart for burial in the wilds near the village. It is also called *mudukāḍu* or *mūdūr* which means the place for the ancients or old men after death.²

The term *mudukāḍu* has persisted in later works such as the *Tēvāram* (7731) and *Nalvaḷi* and a Pudukkōṭṭai inscription, dated 1237 A.D.³, refers to the ancestors of the signatories as *mudukkaḷ*.

¹ See K. A. N. Sastri, *The Cōlas*, I, 68-70; *The Pāṇḍyan Kingdom*, pp. 16-24; and V. R. R. Dikshitar, *Studies in Tamil Lit. and History*, pp. 73-74.

² *Puṛaṇam*, verses 228, 256; *Maṇimēkhalai*, VII, line 63; *Puṛaṇam*, verse 356.

³ *Op. cit.*, No. 317.

It is only later that one finds the two differentiating names *iḍukāḍu*, 'burial-ground', and *śuḍukāḍu*, 'cremation-ground'. In some places the term *īmam* or *īmakkāḍu* is also used, where *īmam* refers to funeral rituals. Later commentators on Tamil works invariably explain all these terms as the 'burning-ground'. They were influenced by contemporary practices, whereas many of the contexts clearly show that *iḍukāḍu* alone is meant. The *puṇam* gives word-pictures of the grave-yard in many contexts,¹ and all these verses may be summarized as follows:—

'The grave-yard (*kāḍu*), the place of the ancients, on the outskirts of the town or on the skirts of the hilly ground, an expanse of brackish or alkaline soil overgrown with the tree-spurge (*Euphorbia antiquorum* or *kaḷḷi*) and other xerophytes and many thorny shrubs, full of buried urns, where, even during daytime, the owl from its hole in the old tree hoots, where the 'red-eared' cock and the *poguval* bird sit without fear on the conical heap (of stones) above the lids inverted over the burial-urns, where the vulture descends on its many foot-paths which cross each other and the strong-billed crow flies as it likes, where the carrion-eating jackals abound, and the hordes of demons, with their teeth defiled by carrion, grasp the carcasses of the dead and eat the white flesh till their mouths reek of the odour, and where lie strewn fragments of white bones and numerous stones concealed by the overgrowth of jungle.'

As regards the actual methods of the disposal of the dead there are many references to burial and some to cremation. The epic *Maṇimēkhalai*, which belongs to the last period of the *Śaṅgam* epoch, summarizes the customs, contemporary and traditional, as follows:

Śuḍuvōr-iḍuvōr-toḍu kuḷippaḍuppōr
Tālvayinaḍaippōr-tāliyiṛkavippōr. (Ch. 6, 11, 66-67.)

The context of these lines is the description of the great grave-yard of the famous Cōḷa capital, Puhār or Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭinam. It was a cosmopolitan city in the early centuries of the Christian era, when in the Tamil country the Vedic, Jaina, Buddhist and other cults had more or less taken root. These two lines enumerate the different sets of people who came there for disposing of the dead, viz. those who cremated (*śuḍuvōr*), those who cast away or exposed the dead to the elements or animals (*iḍuvōr*), those who laid the body in pits which they dug into the ground (*toḍu-kuḷi-ḍauppōr*), those who interred the dead body in subterranean cellars or vaults (*tāl-vayin-aḍaippōr*), and those who placed the body inside a burial-urn and inverted a lid over it (*tāliyiṛ-kavippōr*). The first two methods hardly need any explanation. The third method refers to inhumation; the fourth refers to vaults or cellars (*vayin*) let into the ground (*tāl*), i.e. stone cists and the like, in which the body or the remains of cremation are interred; and the last method, which is brief and descriptive, refers to the placing of the body (or the remains of cremation) into burial urns (*tāli*), the mouth of which was covered by inverting a lid (*kavi*). This is actually what one finds in the case of urn-burials, which represent by far the most dominant custom as described in the earlier *Śaṅgam* works—the *Narṇṇai*, *Paḍiṛruppattu* and *Puraṇānūru*.

The poet Paraṇar describes the mental condition of a distracted mother whose daughter has run away with her lover. The mother prefers death to a life exposed to the scandal of the neighbours and apostrophizes the God of Death as follows:

Māyirum-tāli-kavippa-t
Tāviṇru-kaḷika-ver-kollā-k-kūrṇē. (*Narṇṇai*, 271, lines 11-12.)

¹ *Puṇam* 225, lines 7-8; 238, lines 1-5; 240, lines 7-9; 244, line 3; 237, line 13; 356, lines 1-4; 359, lines 1-8; 360, lines 15-16; 362, lines 12-21; 363, line 10; 364, lines 10-13.

'Oh powerless Lord of Death, that cannot take away my life so that my body may be entombed and covered in a big dark urn . . .'

The *Padiruppattu* collection has a verse which describes in one context that the graveyard (*kāḍu*), 'where lay the burial-urn (*tāli*) that entombed the king, was the vast expanse below the *vanni* (*Prosopis spicigera*) tree'.

Mannar-maraitta tāli

Vanni-manṛattu-viḷaṅgiya-kāḍē. (Padir, 44, lines 22-23.)

This shows both the custom of urn-burial and the manner in which the royal funerals were performed in those times.

On the death of the Cōla king Killi Vaḷavan, who died in Kuḷamurram, the poet Aiyūr Muḍavanār addresses the potter who has to make the urn for his burial and pities his plight as follows:

Kalañjey-kōvē-kalañjey-kōvē

* * * * *

Koḍi-nuḍaṅgu-yānai-neḍu-mā-vaḷavan

Dēvar-ulakam-eydinan-āḍalin

Annōr-kavikkum-kaṇṇakanṇa-tāli

Vanaidal-veṭṭanaiyāyin-enaiyadū-ūm

Irunilam-tikiriya-p-perumalai

Maṇṇāka-vanaidal-ollumo-ninakkē. (Puṛam, 228, lines 1-15.)

'Oh potter who makest pots for the burial-ground, sending up such a volume of smoke from your kiln that it rises up as a great cloud, gathering as if all the darkness of the world had concentrated in one spot—Oh potter! I wonder what you will do now. Your plight is pitiable. The great scion of the line of the Śembiyar (Cōlas), whose armies are distributed over the wide expanse of the earth, who is praised by the learned and is comparable to the Sun with his far-reaching rays, that great and powerful Vaḷavan (Cōla king) whose elephants carry his unfurled banner waving in the air, has reached the world of gods. You need make a large, wide-mouthed urn for entombing such an exalted monarch. Could you do less than use the great earth as your wheel and the great mountain as the clod of clay?'

Peruñcāttanār, another poet, feels that he should not survive his patron Veḷimān, and sings:

Kavi-śen-tāli-k-kuvi-puṛattirunda

* * * * *

Kāḍu-munninanē. (Puṛam, 238, lines 1-5.)

'He has reached the burial-ground where the 'red-eared' cock and the *poguval* sit on the heap (of stones) outside the lid that covered the red burial urn, the strong-billed crow in company with the owl revels with the female of the species of demons', etc.

Another anonymous verse is that of a bereaved wife appealing to the potter who makes the burial-urns and pottery¹: 'Oh potter that makest the pots, Oh potter that makest the pottery for the burial-ground! Pity my plight and show kindness to her who, like a little white lizard clinging to the spokes of the wheel that turns beside the axle-pin of a chariot, has in his (the husband's) company traversed for long the narrow and difficult paths (of life), and condescend to make the burial-urn large enough to include her too.'

¹ *Puṛam*, 256, lines 1-7.

Again another poet, Kūkaikkōliyār, sings of the 'great burial-ground (*kāḍu*) that is full of buried urns, where the owl and the wild-fowl hoot and the crow caws without pause from their holes in the old tree entwined by bind-weeds, the numerous roots of which have begun to shake'.

Nilambaka-vīṇḍa-valaṅgar-pal-vēr
Mudu-mara-p-pondiṭ-kadumena-viyambum
Kūkai-k-kōliyanā-t
Tāliya-peruṅgāḍu-eydiya-ñanrē. (*Puṇam*, 364, lines 10-14.)

There are references to cremation in the *Puṇanānūru* and the following are examples:— Verse 231 (lines 1-4) by Auvaīyār on the death of the chief Nedumānañji; verse 240 (lines 7-10) by Kuṭṭuvan Kīranār on the death of the *Vēl* chief, Āy; verse 244 (lines 1-7) by the Cēra king, Cēramān Mākkōdai, who later died in Kōṭṭambalam, on the death of his queen; verse 246 by the queen of Bhūta Pāṇḍiyan on the occasion of her *satī* on the death of her lord; and verse 363 which says, 'more numerous than the sands on the sea-shore are the kings who ruled this vast earth girt by the great sea, who went away as the lords of the burning-ground without possessing even as much as a *uḍai* leaf (example of littleness)', etc.

Pēreyin Muruvalār in his verse in praise of the Pāṇḍyan king, Nambi Neḍuñjeliyan, refers also to the different kinds of funerals, though not so clearly as in the *Maṇimēkhalai* quoted above.

Iduka-venrō-suḍukavenrō
Paḍu-kulī-p-paḍuka (*Puṇam*, 239, lines 20-21),

where *iduka* refers to exposure and burial, *suḍuka* to cremation and *paḍukulī-p-paḍuka*¹ to inhumation.

Chapter 6 of the *Maṇimēkhalai* has a lengthy description of the cemetery called *Cakravālakkōṭṭam* in Puhār, where were many monumental shrines built of burnt bricks of various sizes, big and small, distributed in long lines over the burials of saints, kings, or wives who committed *satī* along with their husbands, with indications of their four *varṇas*, *āśramas* and sex, sacrificial pillars on which *balis* were made, and mounds of heaped stones, probably cairns (*niṇai-kal-terri*). There is also reference to stones in the grave-yard, from which we have already given a quotation above (*Puṇam*, 363, line 19), where the relatives of the deceased are said to be 'more numerous than the stones in the grave-yard'. The *Tolkāppiyam* mentions the *naḍukal* (*Tol. Por*, 60) which is explained as a tall stone planted over a grave or as a memorial in the grave-yard (*paṇḍalai*) and was probably the precursor of many of the *vīrakkal* or hero-stones and *mā-sati-k-kal* or the stones over the graves of *satīs* or the memorials to the *paṇḍavar*. The *Puṇanānūru*, verses 221, 223, 232, 260-261, 263-65, 306, 314, 329 and 335; *Ahanānūru*, 131; and *Malaipaḍukaḍām*, 388-9, give more information about *naḍukal*.

Medieval literature

That by the eleventh or twelfth century A.D. the ancient custom of urn-burial had become nothing but a memory is proved by notices in the later literature. The *Takkayākapparāṇi* of the poet Oṭṭakkūttar of the twelfth century A.D., a composition on Dakshas's sacrifice, associates the 'dead bodies' inside burial-urns (*tāli*) with the 'dead bodies' in the natural caverns (*pāli*) where 'useless penance' was performed—the latter probably meaning the Jainas

¹ *Paḍukulī* has an alternative reading *paḍuvali* which is preferred by Dr. Swaminatha Aiyar, as it is quoted in *Yāpparuṅgalam*. When compared with what is said in *Maṇimēkhalai*, *paḍukulī* is more suggestive.

or Ājīvakas whose system of penance was 'fruitless' in the eyes of the followers of the Vedic religion.

Tāliyiṛ-piṇaṅgaḷum-talaippaḍā-verum-tavap
Pāliyiṛ-piṇaṅgaḷum-tuḷappeḷap-paḍuttiyē. (Tak. 376.)

In his two other compositions, the *Vikrama-Cōḷan-Ulā* and *Kulōttuṅga-Cōḷan-Ulā*, eulogistic poems on the two contemporary Cōḷa monarchs, he mentions *mudu-makkaḷ-cāḍi*, 'the jar for the ancients'. In his *Ulā* on Vikrama one of the legendary progenitors of the Cōḷa king was Tarāpati, who designed the jar or urn for the ancients when the 'God of Death having become powerless to take any life (at his will) fled and hid himself from view'.

.....*maṇḍindu-*
Ōḍi-maṇali-yolippa-mudumakkaḷ
Cāḍi-vakutta-Tarāpatiyum. (Vik. *Ulā*., lines 14-16.)

In the other *Ulā* on Kulōttuṅga one of the progenitors, the twelfth in the line from the Sun, is said to be the first to devise the '*mudumakkaḷ-cāḍi*' for the old and feeble.

Kūli-talaip-paṇḍu-kō-n-āḷum
Paḍumakkaḍavul-paḍaip-paḍaiyak-kātta
Mudumakkaḷcāḍi-mudalōn. (Kul. *Ulā*., lines 22-24.)

The *Śankara-Cōḷan-Ulā*, another composition of the same class, gives a similar idea. The *Tiruveṅkāṭṭupurāṇam* too has a passage where an ancient king is described as one 'who designed several *mudu-makkaḷ-cāḍi* for the grand old men at a golden age, when the God of Death could not take away any life'.

Śitta-makiḷndu-inbamura-śeṅgō-naḍatta-naman
Uttamanām-enrannāl-uyir-koḍu-pōkāmaiyyināl
Moytta-mudiyōrkku-mudumakkaḷcāḍi-pala
Vaitta-kula-dīpakanē-mannakō-mannakō. (Tiriveṇ. *Satyanaḷ*, 9.)

This accounts for the tradition in later times that very old people, who had lived their 'four-score and twenty' and were decrepit, were placed inside large urns until their death, to avoid discomfort. This accounts also for the quotation of a late commentator, Naccinārkinīyār (c. fourteenth century), in his commentary on the earliest extant Tamil work *Tolkappiyam*, attributing to the Ājīvakas the practice of 'entering the *tāḷi* for penance until death'.

Tāḷi-kavippa-t-tavam-ceyvār-maṇṇāka
Vāḷiya-norṇana-mālvaraiye.

Conclusions

If we accept the postulate that the literature of a people of a particular period not only portrays contemporary life and events but may also embody in it earlier traditions, and that the advanced state of civilization which we find in the *Śaṅgam* period probably had its origin much earlier, we may place the earlier limits of the megalithic and urn-field culture, which seems to have been a dominant factor of early Tamil civilization, in the pre-*Śaṅgam* epoch, i.e. earlier perhaps than the last three centuries B.C. and earlier, too, than effective 'Aryan' contact with South India.

The gradual percolation of 'Aryan' ideas into the Tamil culture is noticeable in the different strata of the *Śaṅgam* literature, and as we approach the close of the period the influence of these ideas gets more and more marked until the two cultures become

thoroughly intermingled; when we hear of the Tamil kings performing and protecting Vedic sacrifices, and find cremation according to Vedic rites taking precedence over the more ancient customs of burial. By about the fifth century A.D. comes a dark chapter in Tamil history, synchronizing with the Kaḷabhra interregnum, and when we see light again in the sixth to seventh centuries A.D. we have a literature totally different from the *Śaṅgam* works in vocabulary, diction and metre, and predominantly devotional in nature. This, taken together with the misconceptions about the burial-urn enumerated above from the literature of the eleventh century and after, indicates the later limit of the megalithic and urn-field burial customs in South India as the beginning of the fifth century A.D. or earlier.

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